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SUBJECT: New Cabinets in Rheinland-Pfalz, Baden-Wuerttemberg -- Few Surprises

REF: A) Frankfurt 2124, B) Frankfurt 1927

Sensitive but unclassified; not for internet distribution.

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On May 18 and June 14, state parliaments in Rheinland-Pfalz (R-P) and Baden-Wuerttemberg (B-W) re-elected incumbent Minister-Presidents Kurt Beck (SPD/Social Democrats) and Guenther Oettinger (CDU/Christian Democrats) respectively. In addition to full support from their own parties, both received votes from the opposition (in secret ballots). While Beck's new cabinet appointments met widespread approval, Oettinger drew criticism for leaving the Baden-Wuerttemberg cabinet essentially unchanged. END SUMMARY.

The Rheinland-Pfalz Cabinet

¶2. (U) The R-P Social Democrats' absolute majority gave it control of the two ministries that had been under Free Democratic Party (FDP) management during the longtime SPD-FDP coalition. Those additional ministries gave Minister-President (M-P) Beck the opportunity to promote young lieutenants into positions of visibility and responsibility. The new parliament re-elected Beck with 54 out of 101 votes (i.e., one more than the SPD's 53 seats). Interestingly, the extra vote must have come from the ranks of disheartened Christian Democrats who had suffered their worst election defeat ever in the state, since the FDP abstained from voting (and Greens are no longer represented).

¶3. (U) The new R-P Cabinet (all SPD):
-- Kurt Beck (Minister-President)
-- Prof. Dr. Juergen Zoellner (Deputy Minister-President and Minister for Science, Continued Education, Research and Culture)
-- Malu Dreyer (Minister for Labor, Social Affairs, Family and Health)
-- Doris Ahnen (Minister for Education, Women and Youth)
-- Karl Peter Bruch (Minister for Interior and Sports)
-- Prof. Dr. Ingolf Deubel (Minister for Finance - new)
-- Dr. Heinz Georg Bamberger (Minister for Justice - new)
-- Hendrik Hering (Minister for Economics, Transportation, Agriculture and Viniculture - new)
-- Margit Conrad (Minister for Environment and Consumer Protection).

Baden-Wuerttemberg State Cabinet

¶4. (U) In the March 26 state election, the B-W CDU took 69 of the 139 seats in the parliament (one seat short of an absolute majority) and holds a comfortable 14 seat majority along with its traditional

coalition partner, the FDP. Oettinger gained election as Minister-President with 85 votes, one vote more than the coalition's seats -- the second time that Oettinger has received votes from the opposition in secret balloting.

¶5. (U) The B-W Cabinet (CDU except where indicated):

- M-P Guenther Oettinger
- Prof. Dr. Ulrich Goll (FDP - Justice Minister and Deputy Minister President)
- Willi Staechele (Minister at the State Chancellery and for European Affairs)
- Heribert Rech (Minister of Interior)
- Helmut Rau (Minister for Education, Youth and Sports)
- Prof. Dr. Peter Frankenberg (Minister for Science, Research and Arts)
- Gerhard Stratthaus (Minister for Finance)
- Ernst Pfister (FDP - Minister for Economics)
- Peter Hauk (Minister for Agriculture and Consumer Protection)
- Dr. Monika Stolz (Minister for Social Affairs and Employment)
- Tanja Goenner (Minister for Environment)
- Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Reinhard (Minister and Representative in Berlin)
- Prof. Dr. Claudia Huebner (Council of State for Demographic Change and Senior Citizens).

COMMENT

¶6. (SBU) Beck's decision to include younger SPD leaders in the Rheinland-Pfalz cabinet is likely part of his effort to groom new state leadership for the SPD. Contacts within the R-P SPD privately recognize that much of the party's strength within the state is based on Beck's personal popularity and that the time to solidify

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the next generation of leadership is now. With Beck as national SPD chief and a potential contender in 2009 federal elections, state party activists are forced to consider an exit strategy that paves the way for a successor while minimizing internal party fallout.

¶7. (SBU) In contrast, the "status quo" Baden-Wuerttemberg cabinet (no new ministers) sparked widespread criticism. Oettinger's supporters (the "progressive" camp within the CDU, who appeal to urban and educated voters) had hoped for a cabinet shuffle as the signal of a new beginning. The opposition -- and even some Oettinger supporters -- criticized his failure to bring in new faces as a sign that he will "go slow" in modernizing the decades-long conservative hold on power in that state. END COMMENT.

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